THE MONOGRAPH SERIES

RECORDS OF EARLY AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE
AS SOURCE MATERIAL

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VOLUME XX

MONOGRAPH FOUR

The Later Dwelling Architecture of Cape Ann, Part I

BY STUART BARTLETT

Research and Measured Drawings by Frank Chouteau Brown
Photographs by Arthur C. Haskell

Some of the simplest yet more dignified examples of these later dwellings are to be found on that portion of the Cape now known as Rockport, which name was given it in 1840, when it was finally set off as a separate town from the then flourishing granite quarries at Pigeon Cove. Previous to that time the district had been known as "Sandy Bay," or was merely called "the Cape" and had been part of Gloucester town since its earliest settlement.

It lies on the eastern part of the Cape, covering an area of about six and one-quarter miles, and is divided into three sections. The North Village, also known as Pigeon Cove, contains the principal quarries; and its old buildings have already been described in Vol. XIX, Monograph Four of this Series. In summer it includes the largest part of the transient population of the region. At the other extremity, towards Straitsmouth and "Lands End," is the section known as the "South End." This, too, has been largely covered in the Sixth Monograph of Vol. XIX.

There remains only the "Center" where, among the many jetties and wharves, covered with fishermen's "shacks" and artists' studios; the winding streets leading up the rocky slopes to the higher inland country of the Cape, with their old and new houses and cottages, are to be found those few dignified and simple "later houses" remaining on this part of Cape Ann. As a rule these houses were the product of the early fishing industry (at one time two-thirds of the fishing vessels of Cape Ann belonged in Rockport) but one of the most conspicuous of the town's late houses is the mansion built in 1809 by the Reverend David Jewett, the second minister of what is now the First Parish Church. It is a simple yet distinguished four-chimney square type of dwelling.

Probably next in importance among the houses in that locality is the Caleb Norwood, Jr., House (one of at least six "Norwood Houses" in Rockport), standing at the beginning of the slope, at 37 Cove Hill. It belongs to the three-story type of house that was produced in a number of the more prosperous Massachusetts coast communities, few of which are older than the last quarter of the Eighteenth Century.

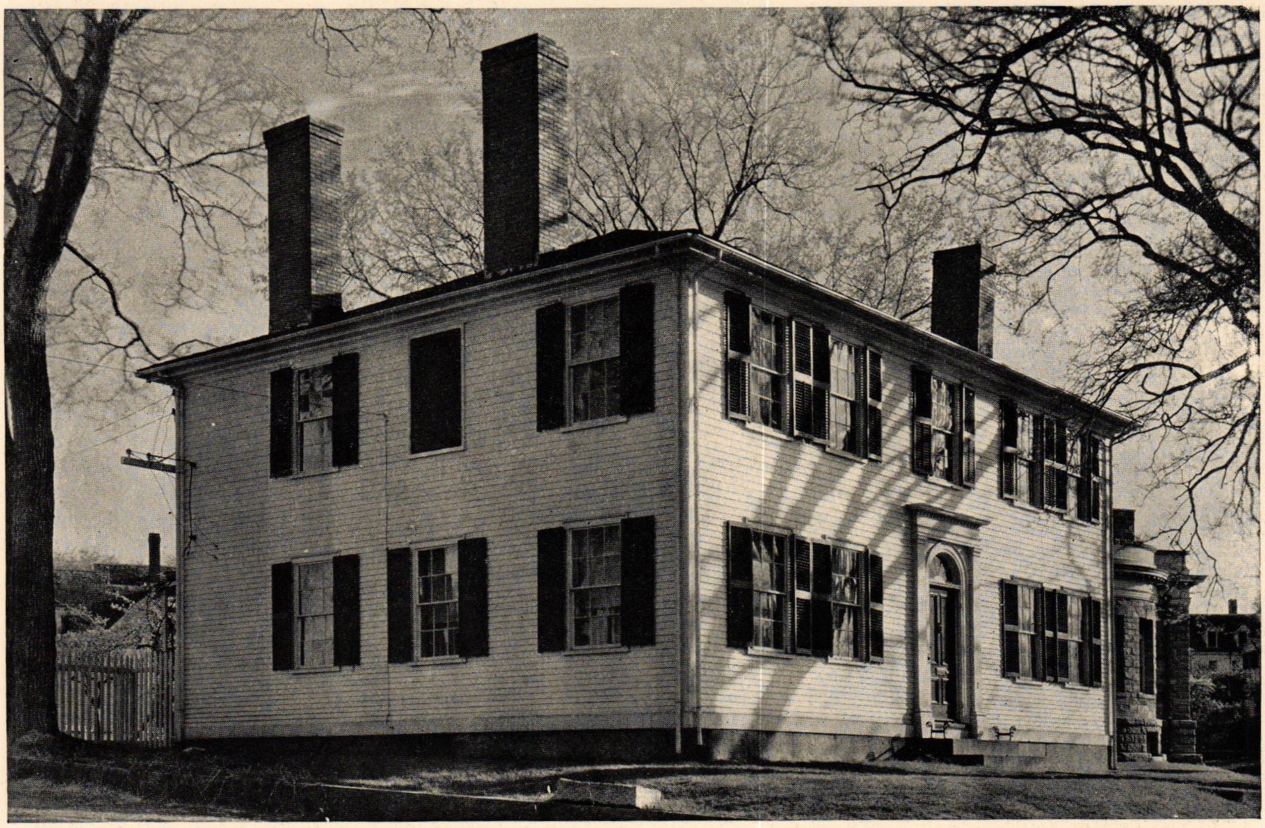
Nearly opposite, upon a modest street running away from the Harbor, are the two "twin" Gott Houses. They are nearly alike in exterior arrangement and exhibit only minor variations of detail, as will appear from a comparison of the two doorways, although the plans and interior details vary. As a matter of fact, No. 5, the second one to be built, now appears to be the older, possibly largely from the fact that it still possesses the inside "sliding shutters" usually found in much older dwellings.

A little further up the hill leading toward the "South End" (and so impatient to arrive there that it changes its name no less than four times within a short half-mile of length!) is another remaining Gott Mansion, built in 1770 by one John Gott. This, too, is one of the six or seven three-story dwellings in Rockport, although the upper story was actually added

at a later time. The house is of unusual plan, with several staircases and two fireplaces.

Another of the so-called "Norwood Houses" is the Ebenezer Pool House, fronting upon the famous Dock Square, almost at the beginning of "Bear Skin Neck" (now usually spelled the other way!) where artists, bathers, and models cluster so thickly on hot summer days.

It is upon this same square that the old Tavern, with its basement Taproom and second-story ballroom (added in 1838), still stands; although now, alas, the ballroom has been divided into many rooms, and the old archway through which the coaches drove into the irregular borders of the harbor of Gloucester itself. Here, at one time, were all the houses of the wealthy sea captains or owners of the sailing vessels that then were tied up between voyages at piers located at the water end of the gardens, down which their owners looked from their front doorways on the land side above. At that time the present "Main Street" of Gloucester did not exist. At a much later date it was cut ruthlessly through the old gardens and "front yards" of the big houses perched upon the higher ground above. For a time they were still entered through the old front doorways facing toward the harbor; with a shortened yard, and new fences with

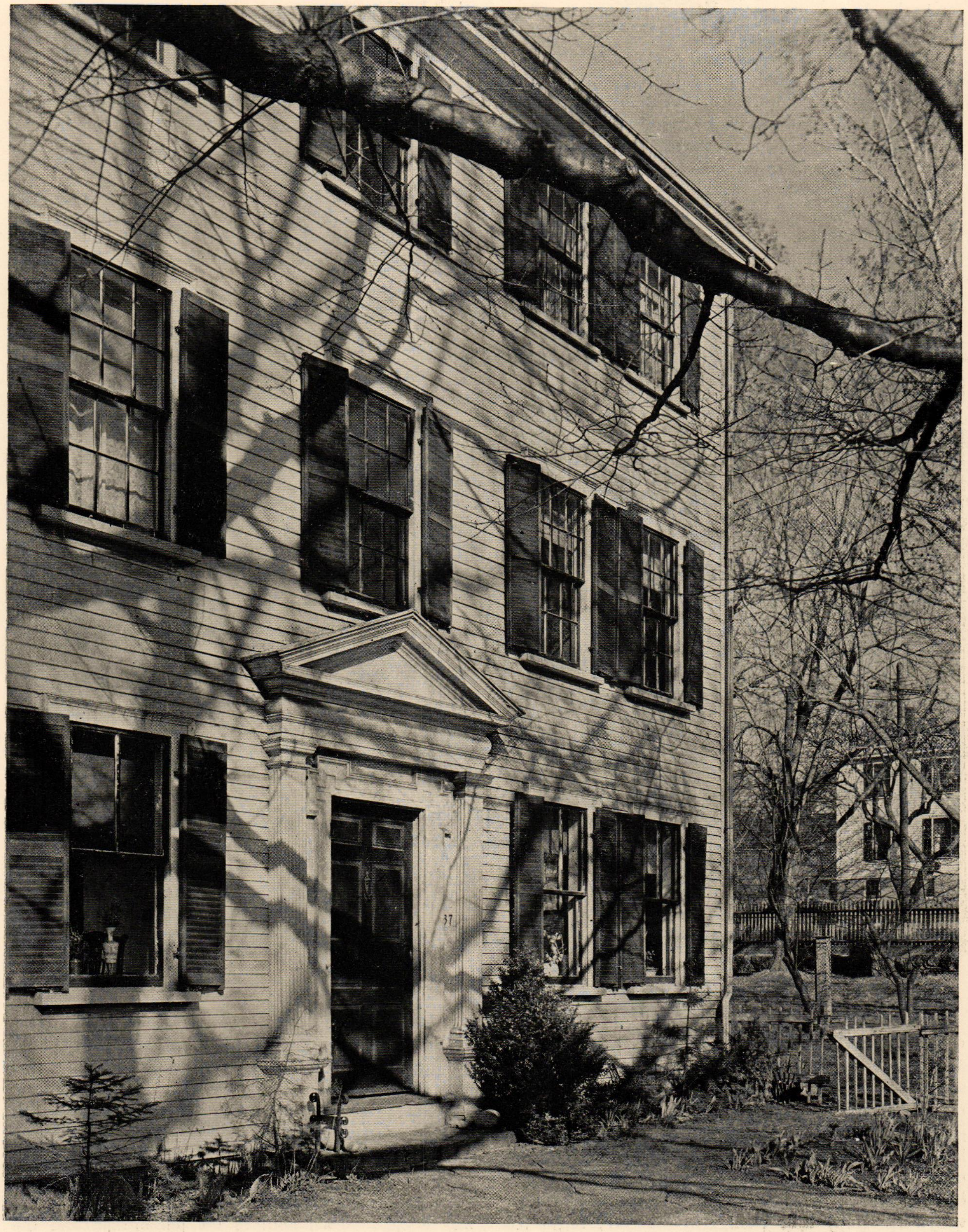


REV. DAVID JEWETT HOUSE—1806-09—MAIN STREET, ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

inner courtyard has been filled in with a modern shop. It has still more recently become the headquarters of the artists of the vicinity; and who better than they can appreciate the advantages of restoring the former picturesqueness and appeal of this one-time center of community life on this portion of Cape Ann!

Just as the earliest examples of dwellings within the Cape area are still to be found on that portion where the first permanent settlements appear to have been made—the region of Annisquam and West Gloucester—so are the greater number of examples of the more prosperous later periods to be found still about the gateways and paths leading up from the new street below. Upon the other side of this street lay the warehouses and piers; and gradually business began to encroach upon the land side of the street, with stores built upon the lower ends of the gardens; until today the newer "Main Street" is banked almost solidly along both sides with stores and business blocks, leaving a few of the old houses to be approached through store passageways or small entrance alleys; or forcing those located still higher upon the bank to turn about for entrance access to the next higher street paralleling the harbor, through a new or old doorway

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THE CALEB NORWOOD, JR., HOUSE—1775-80—ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

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upon the former rear, or side, of the old dwelling.

The Sargent-Murray-Gilman-Hough House is an example of this progress, except that it has here gone even a step farther; and, of still *more* recent years, the families preserving the house have been able to purchase again the land fronting upon Main Street, and have torn down the new stores and built a new fence, so that it is once again possible to view the front of the house upon its Harbor side. For many years this noble house stood unregarded in the town. It was a tenement for some time, and only a few knew the beauties of the finish its humble rear exterior concealed. Then it was discovered that John Murray, a minister of the beautiful church built in 1806, and still standing, had once lived in this house. He had married Judith Sargent, daughter of Winthrop Sargent, who was also an ancestor of the late artist, the lamented John Singer Sargent. Aided by those interested in the lives of these two rather strangely combined leaders, the house has been reclaimed, and with surprisingly little change or necessary repair has been placed in a condition where its innate beauty and charm of detail can be seen and appreciated by visitors.

Of course, it has followed that the years of prosperity of the fishing and other related industries in Gloucester has been the cause of the destruction of most all the old houses that once bordered its inner harbor. One still remains, and is used as an Old Ladies' Home; a few others, further away from the more bustling business section of the Main Street, still exist precariously, but only on sufferance, as tenements; often rebuilt, so that many would not even suspect their former magnificence.

Almost beside the "Sawyer Free Library" stands the old Mackenzie House at 90 Middle Street, built about 1759, with an unusual treatment about the entrance door. As Middle Street continues its course around the harbor toward the main waterfront, it leads by other houses with exterior and interior beauty, as well as architectural details to commend them to the trained and appreciative eye. One of these is the Capt. John Somes house, with its very characteristic doorway design, shown both in the photograph and the measured drawing. These entrances were chosen for



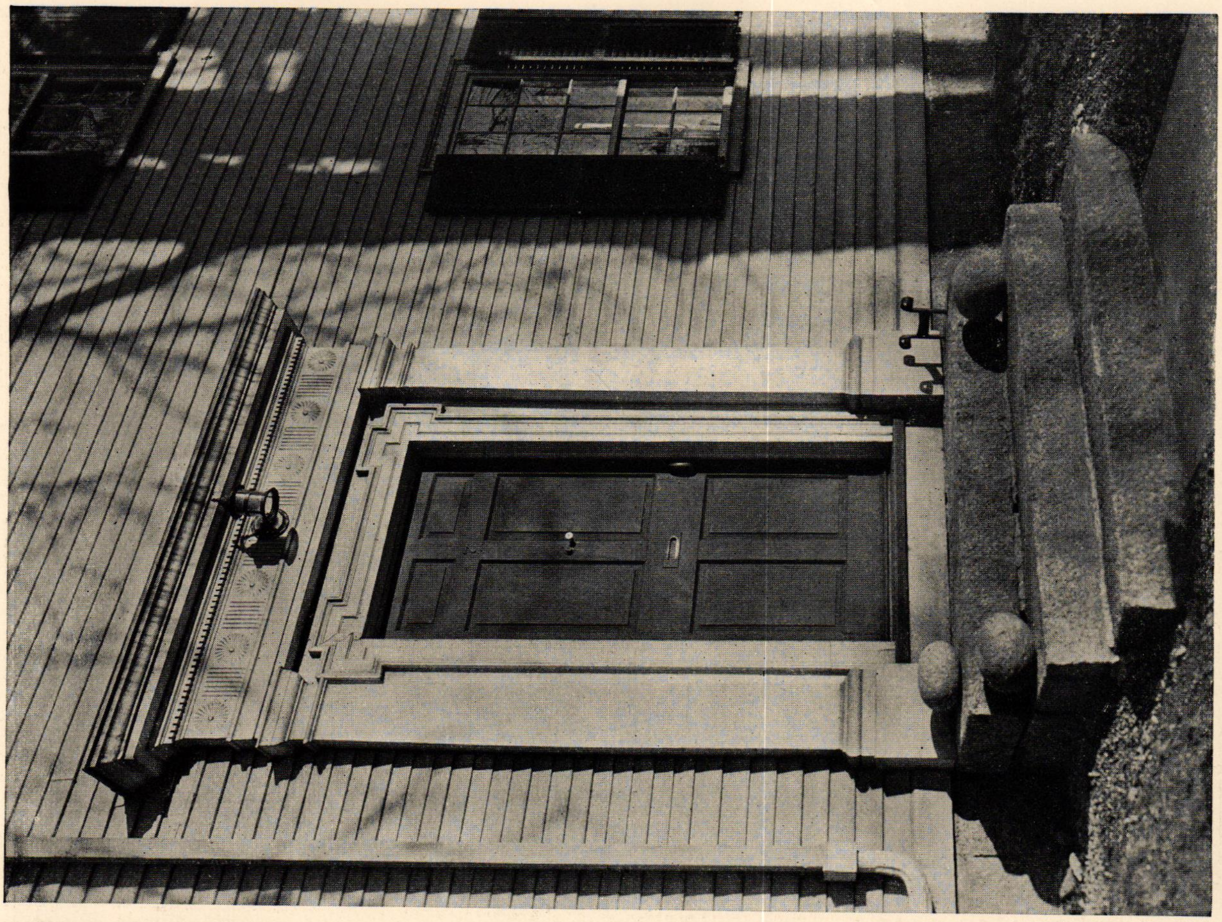
THE EBENEZER POOL HOUSE—1798—DOCK SQUARE, ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

(Measured Drawing of Doorway on Page 151)



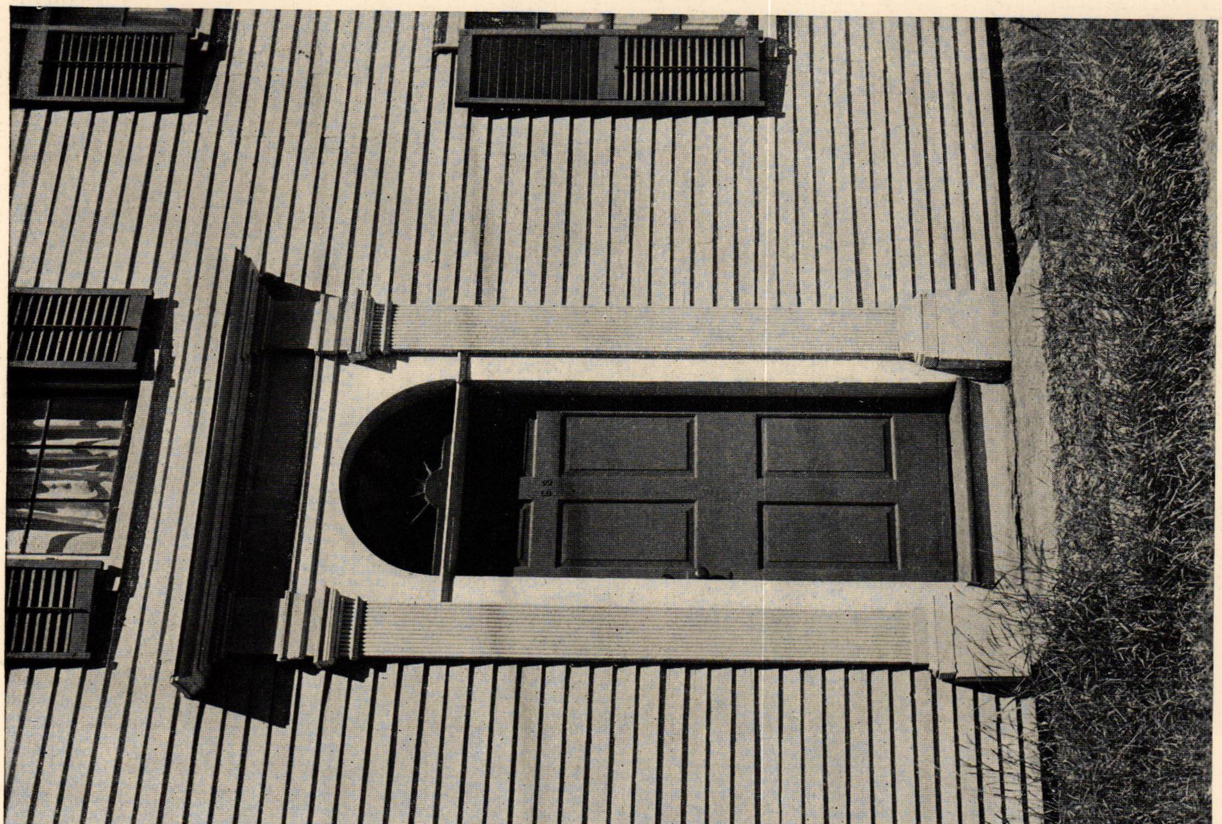
DOORWAY—5 GOTT STREET (GOTT HOUSE) 1806—ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

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Doorway—7 Gott Street

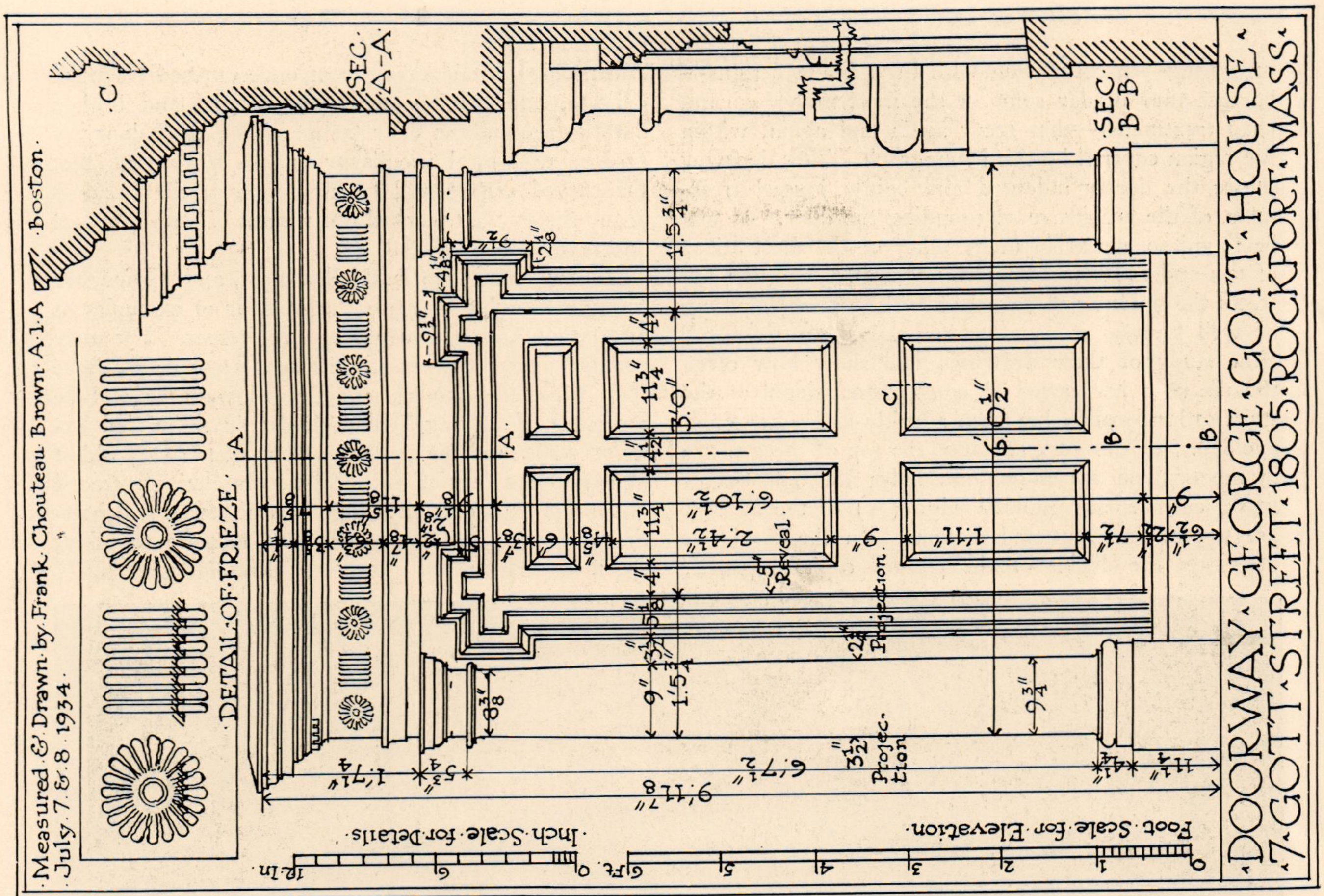
GEORGE GOTT HOUSE—1805—ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

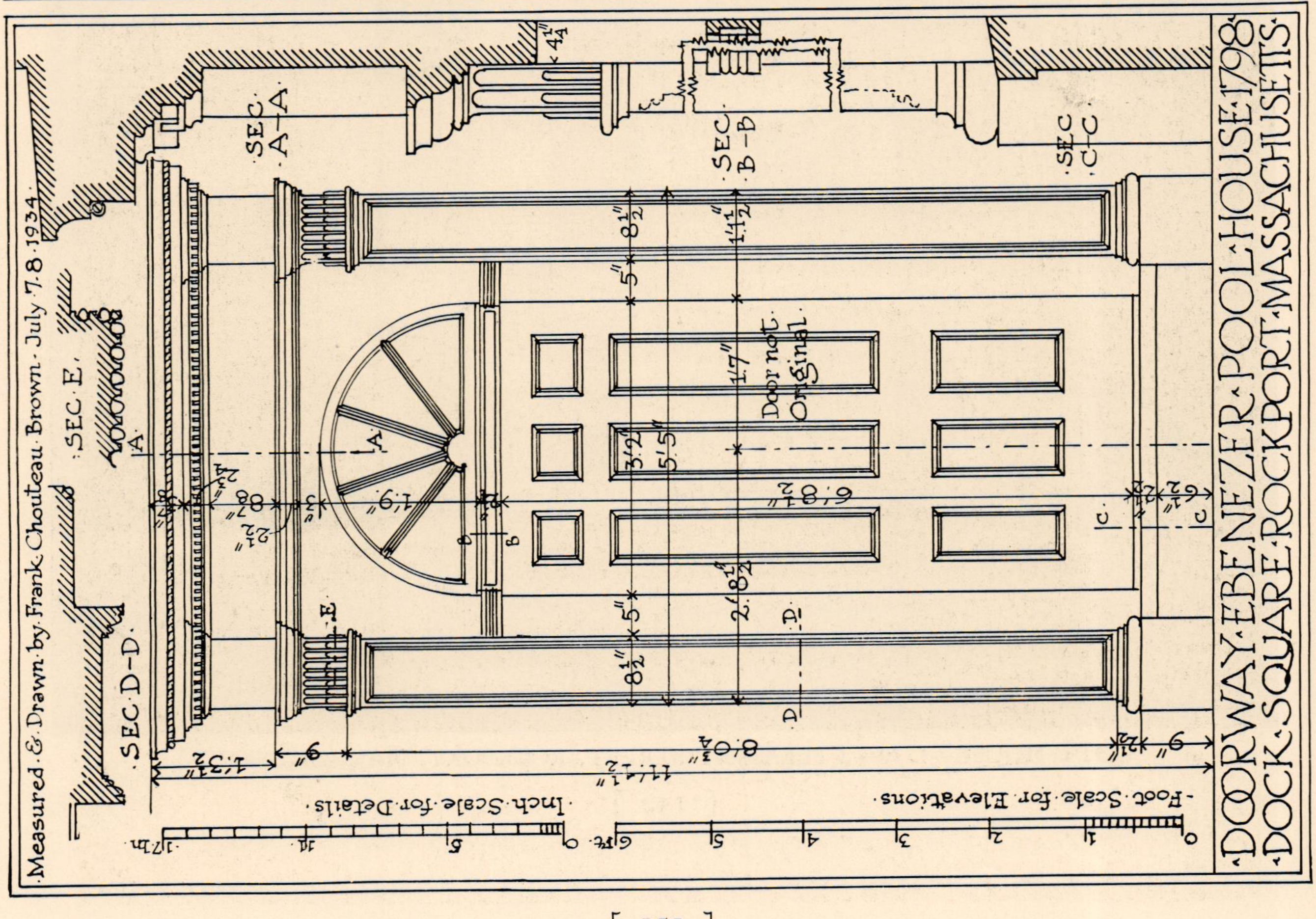


Doorway—83 Main Street

HOUSE AT ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

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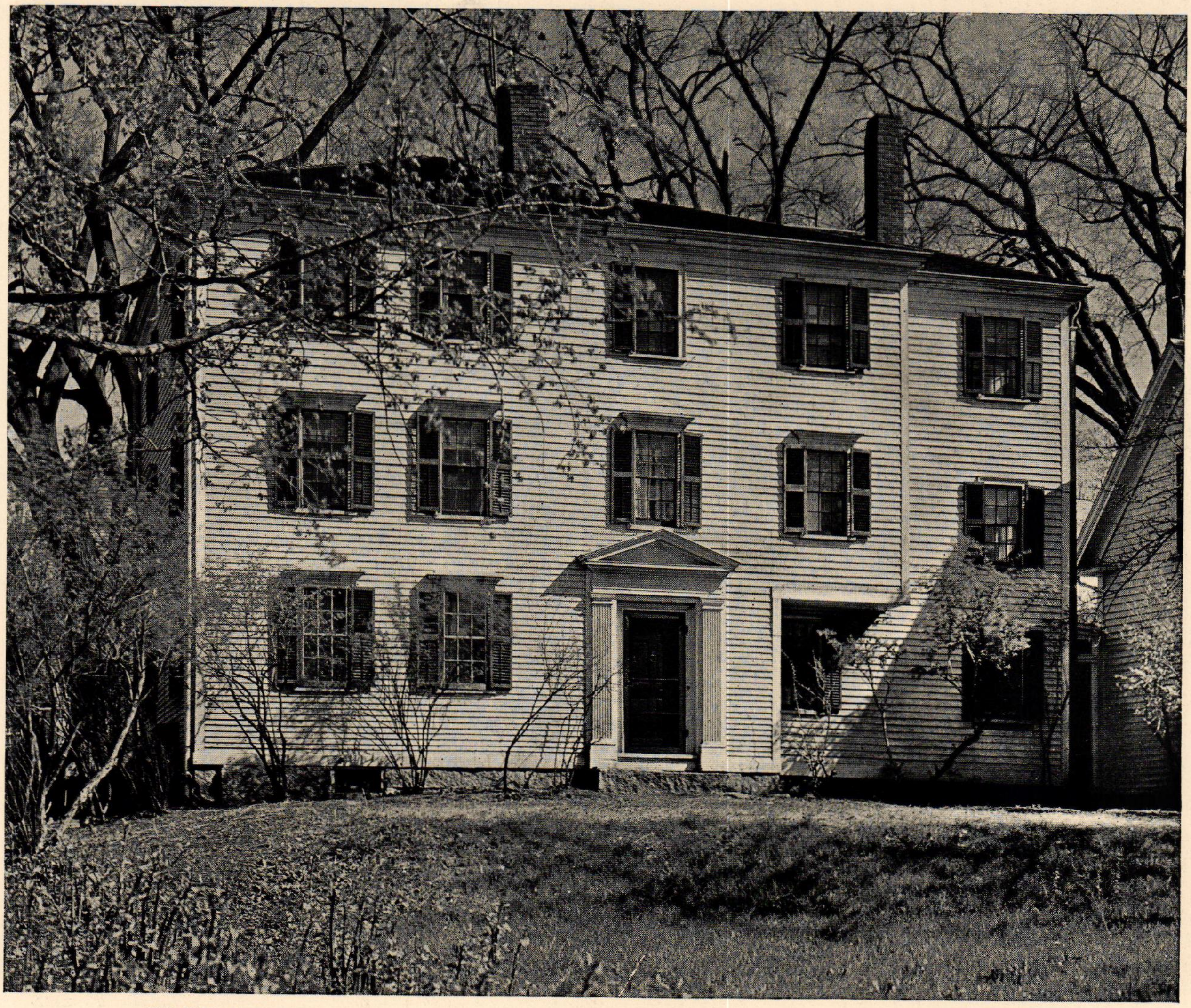

Measured & Drawn by Frank Chouteau Brown A.I.A Boston
July 7 & 8 1934
DETAIL OF FRIEZE
SEC A-A
SEC B-B
Reveal
Projection
Inch Scale for Details
Foot Scale for Elevation
DOORWAY GEORGE GOTT HOUSE
7 GOTT STREET 1805 ROCKPORT MASS


Measured & Drawn by Frank Chouteau Brown July 7 8 1934
SEC E
SEC D-D
SEC A-A
SEC B-B
SEC C-C
Door not Original
Inch Scale for Details
Foot Scale for Elevations
DOORWAY EBENEZER POOL HOUSE 1798
DOCK SQUARE ROCKPORT MASSACHUSETTS

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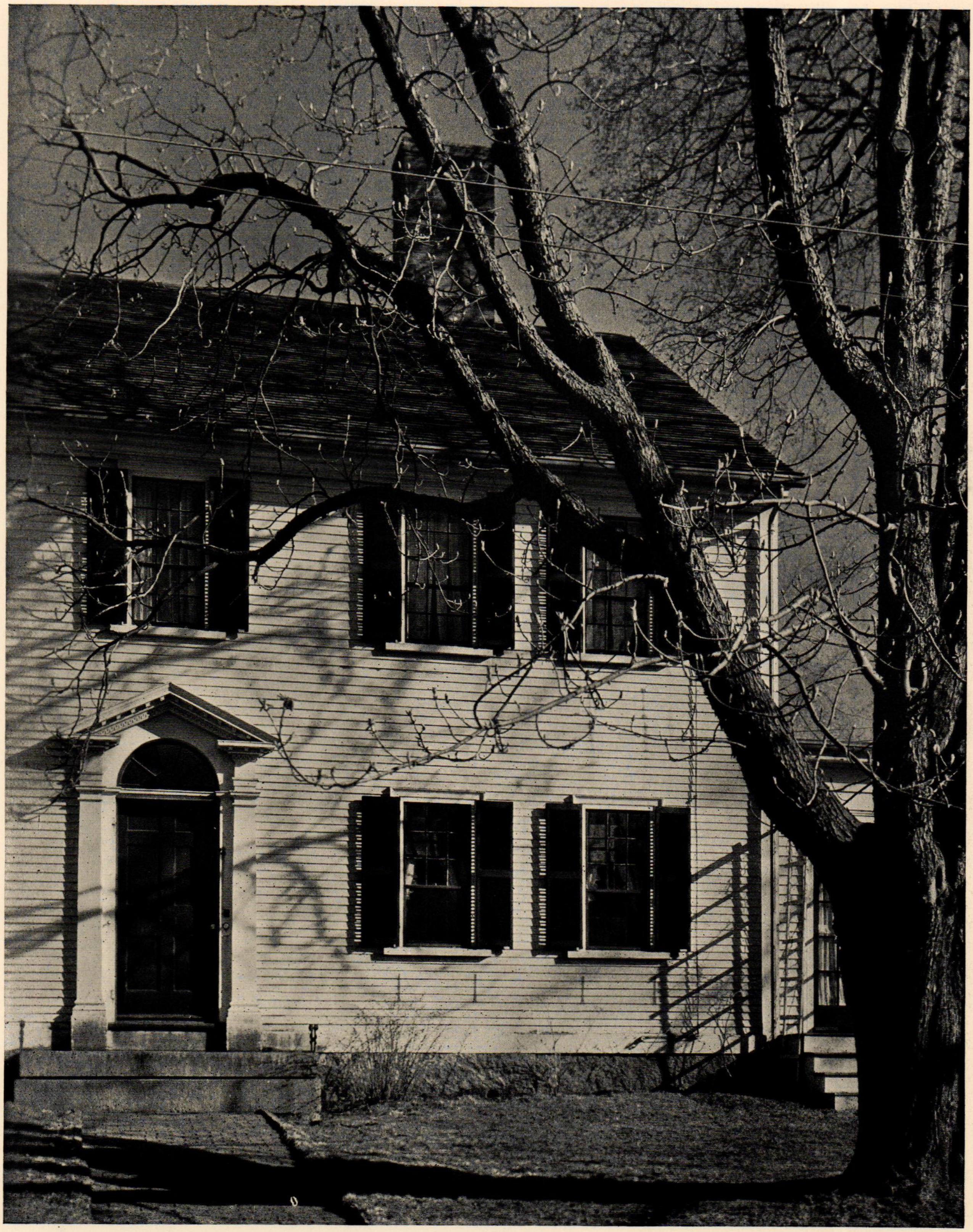
measuring—in connection with these house designs—because they display some of the most individual and local treatments—that recur again and again, within the region covered by this Monograph. This doorway shows the deeply indented and boldly jogged treatment of the architrave surrounding the door. It will be found to appear in many other of the illustrations of this and the succeeding Monograph. Also, it illustrates the boldness of reveal and freedom of handling of well known and understood classical models. A close study of these drawings will show how often the use of a hackneyed or conventional detail of the strict order-formula has been adroitly and successfully avoided. In this very entrance the top of the grooves in the triglyph are ended unusually; the door architrave, cornice, and molded edge (A) of the bracket are not the conventional sections. In the Rockport doorways the details of the pilaster capitals, panels, and molded entablature are at once unusually simple, delicate, and precise—while the jogged and broken outlines around the door frame of the Gott doorway re-echo that local peculiarity, at the same time that the carved ornamental treatment along the frieze is an unusually well worked out variant of an often used and favorite local model.

Thirty years ago both Rockport and Gloucester contained double or triple the number of examples of interesting Colonial dwelling architecture that they contain today. From Gloucester, particularly, have they vanished—though sometimes they may still be suspected of lurking behind modernly reshingled exterior walls, and the outlines of one of the very oldest houses in the district may still be tantalizingly traced under the exterior camouflage of a plastered and half-timbered face-wall treatment that may be found at the now well-named corner of "Pest House Lane"!



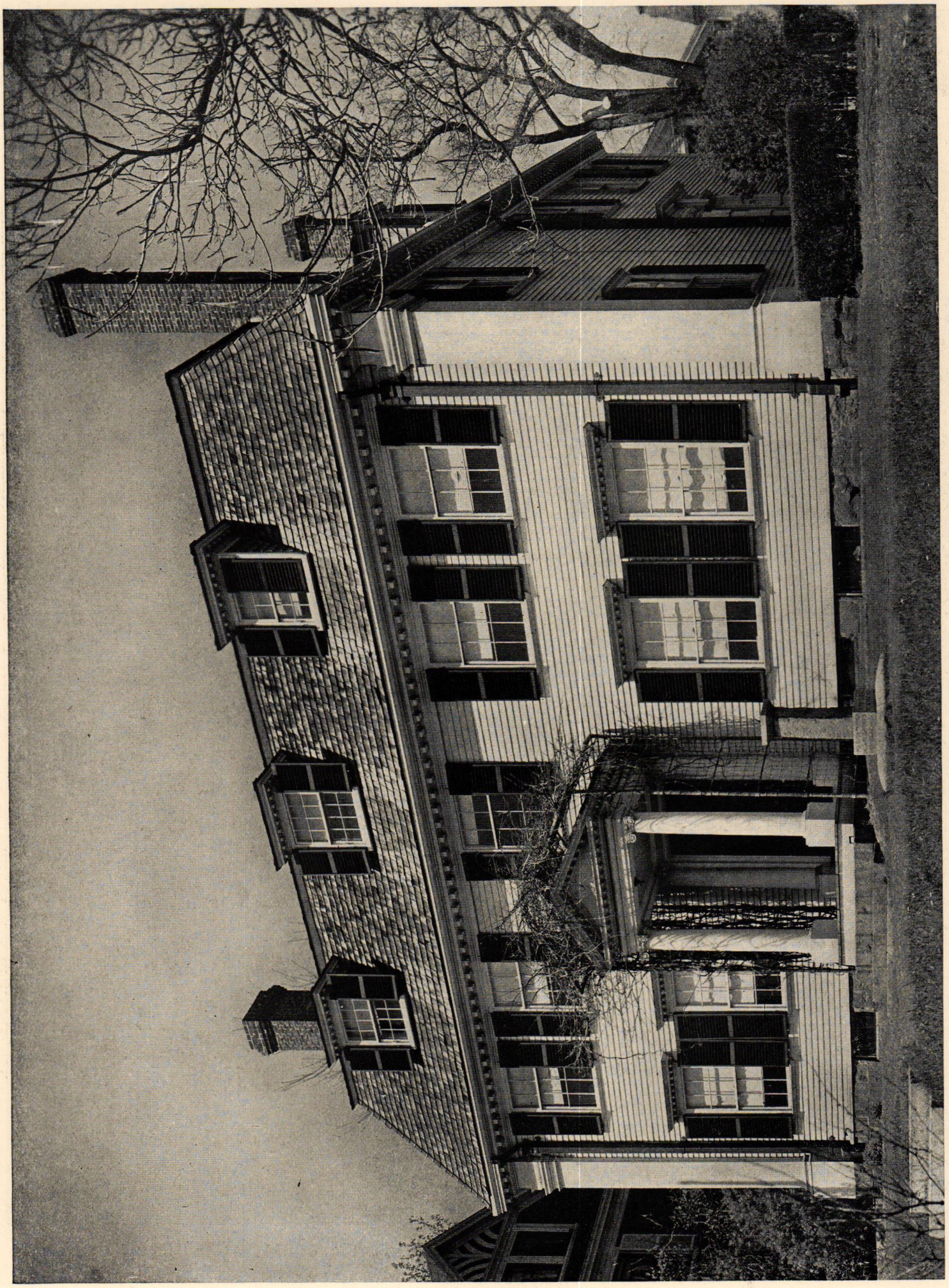
GOTT HOUSE—1770—2 PLEASANT STREET, ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

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HOUSE AT 15 HIGH STREET—1800-20—ROCKPORT, MASSACHUSETTS

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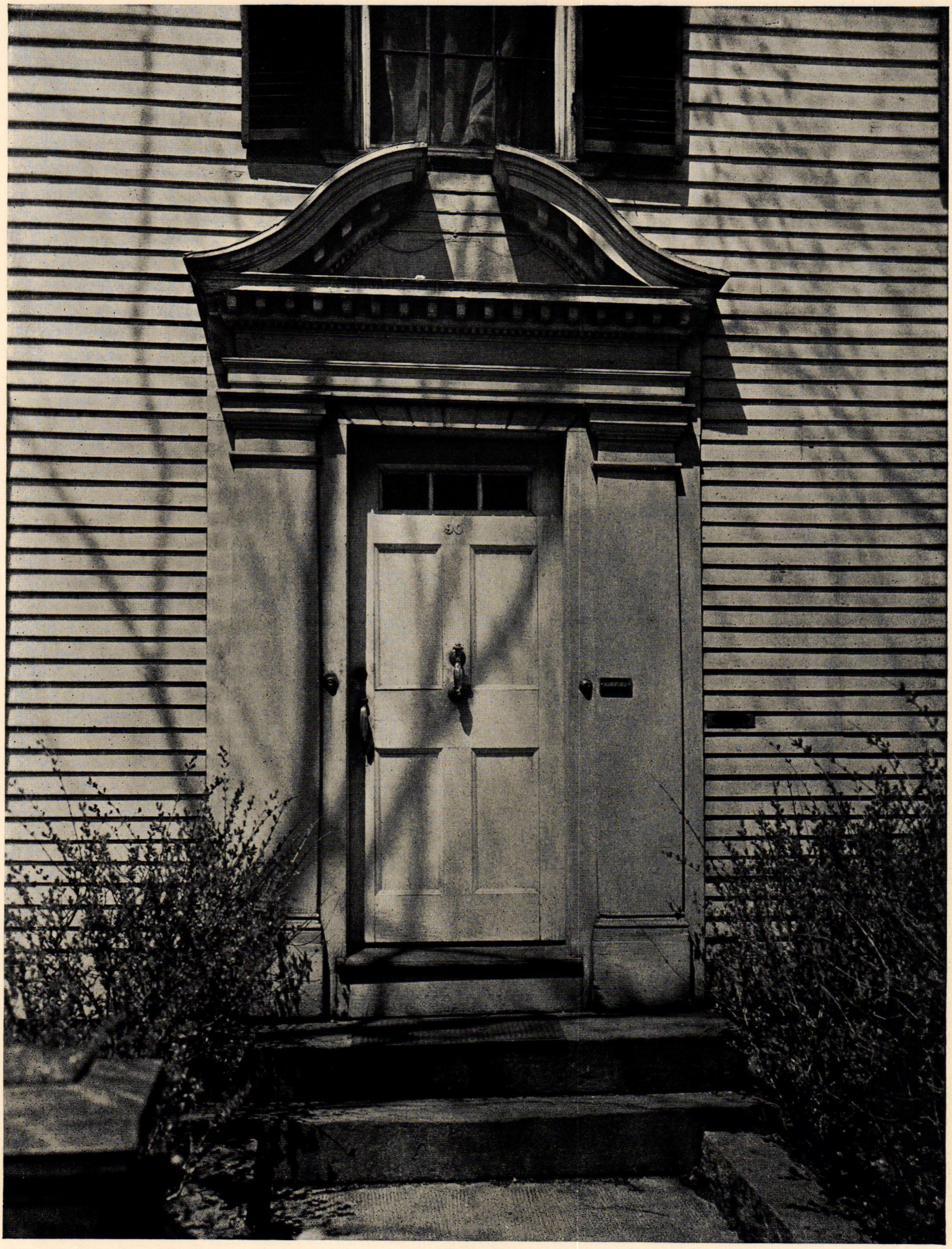
THE SARGENT-MURRAY-GILMAN-HOUGH HOUSE—1768—GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

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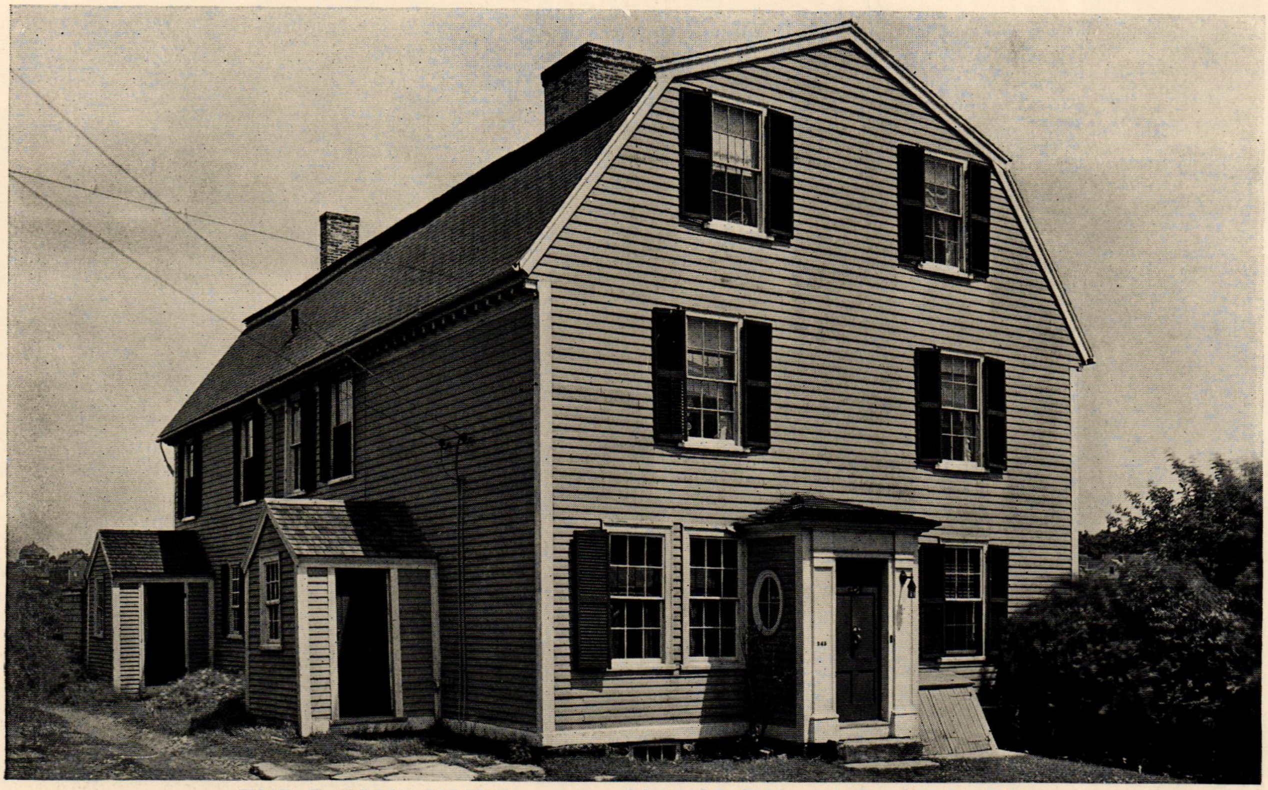
THE MACKENZIE HOUSE—1760—90 MIDDLE STREET, GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

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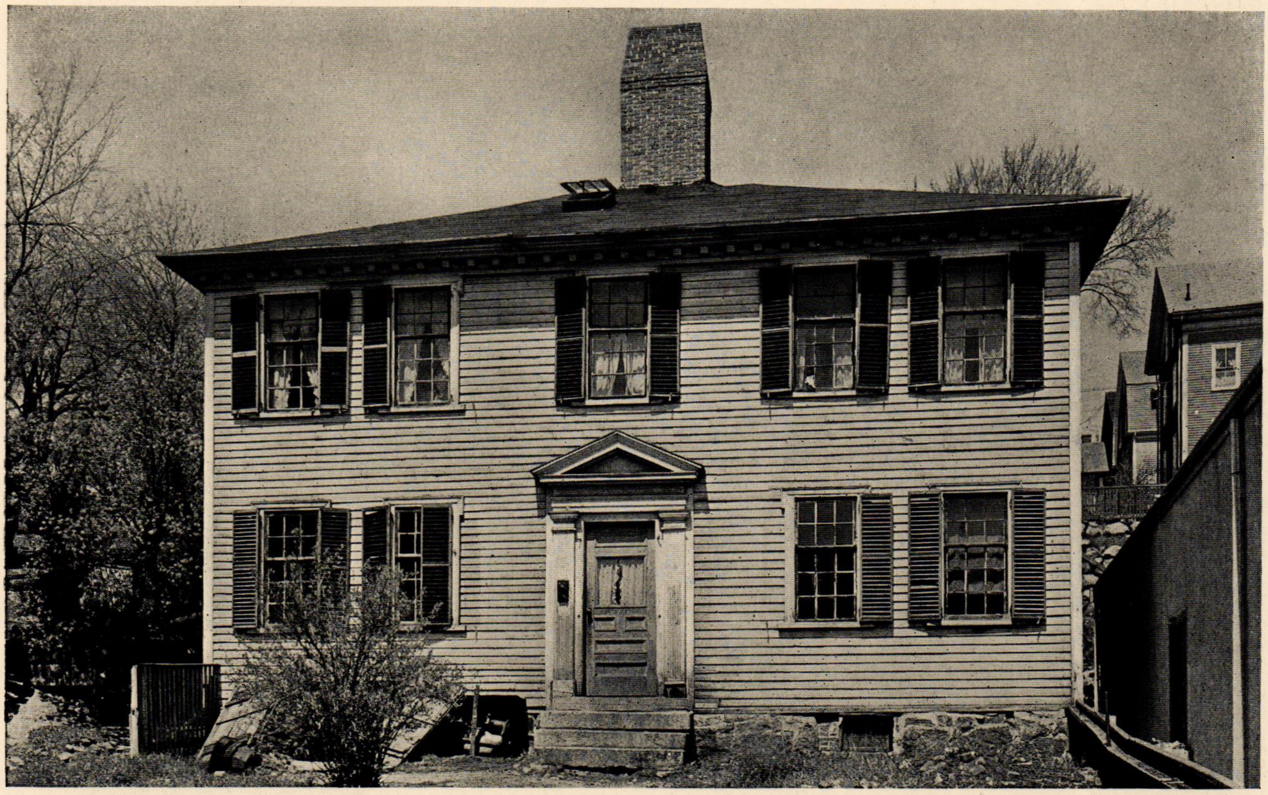


Doorway
THE MACKENZIE HOUSE—1760—GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

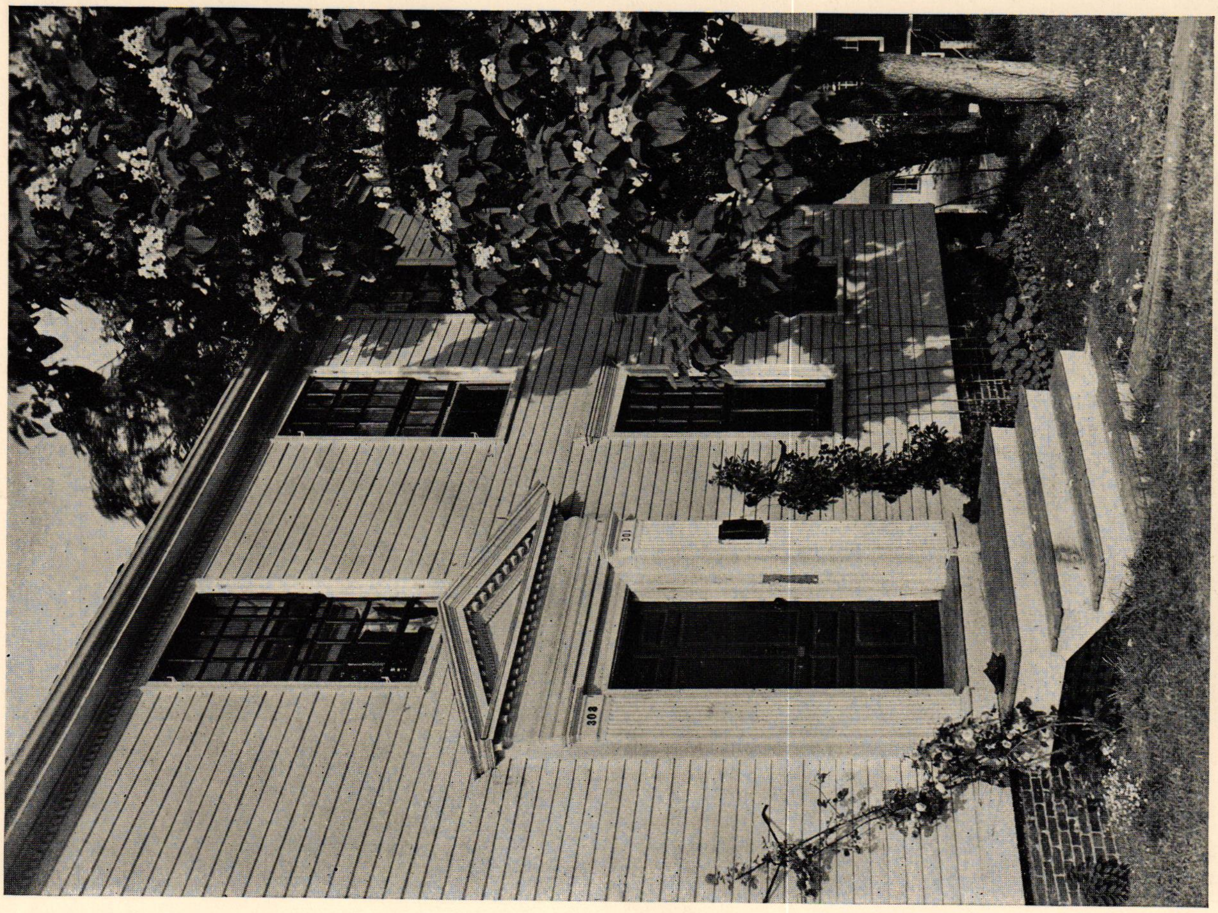
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THE BABSON HOUSE—1740—GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

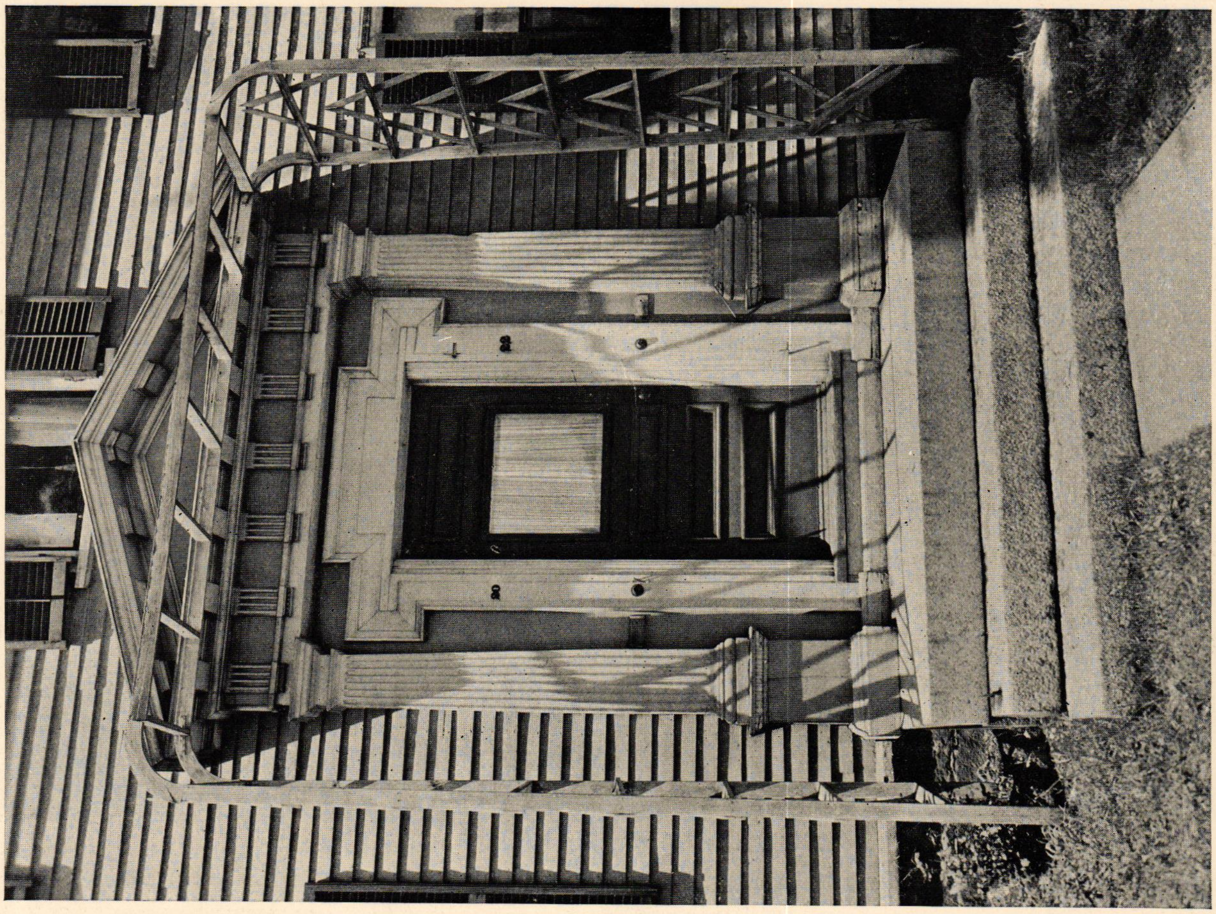


"OLD COLLINS HOUSE"—1740—254 MAIN STREET, GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS



Doorway—301 and 303 Washington Street

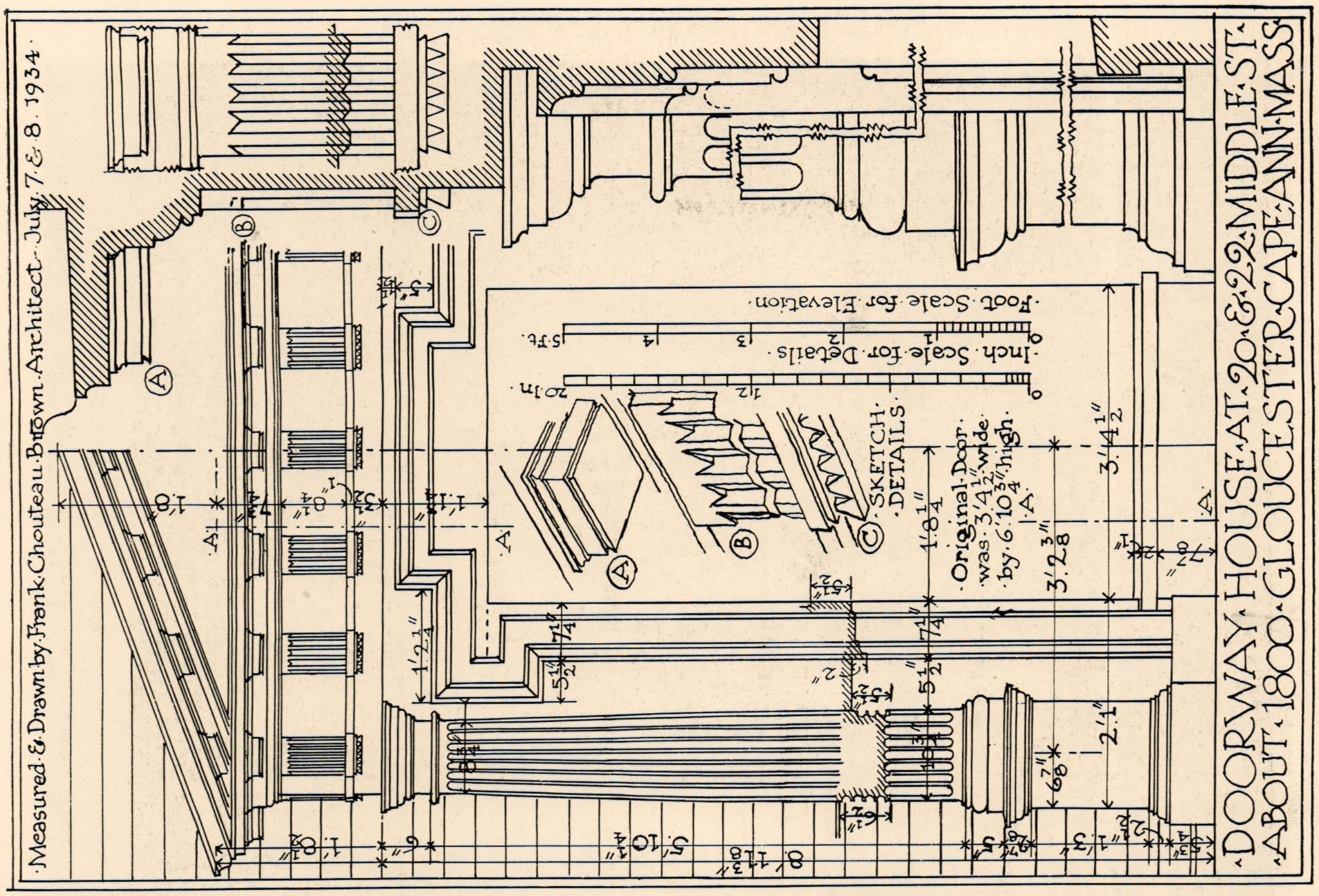
HOUSE—1780—GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS



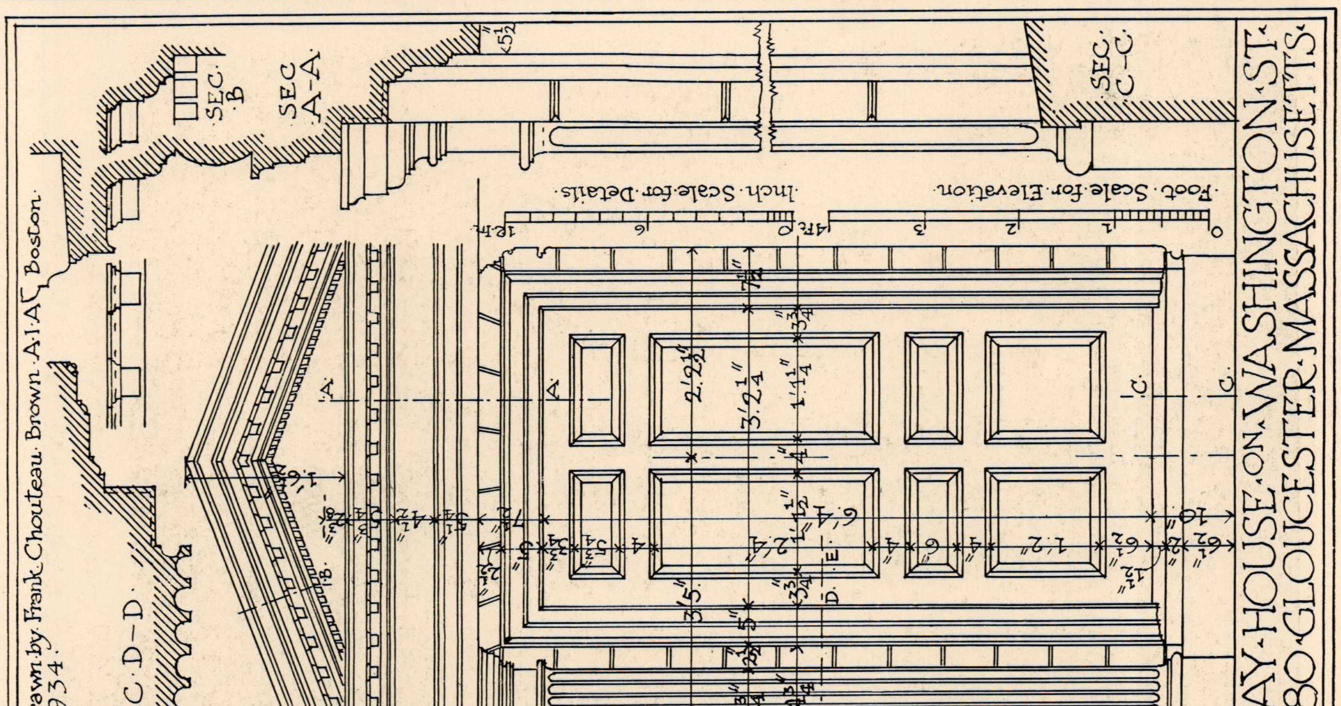
Doorway—20 and 22 Middle Street

THE CAPT. JOHN SOMES HOUSE—1800—GLOUCESTER, MASS.

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Measured & Drawn by Frank Chouteau Brown Architect July 7 & 8 1934
SKETCH DETAILS
Original Door was 3'4½" wide by 6'10¾" high
Inch Scale for Details
Foot Scale for Elevation
DOORWAY·HOUSE·AT·20·&·22·MIDDLE·ST·
ABOUT·1800·GLOUCESTER·CAPE·ANN·MASS·



Measured & Drawn by Frank Chouteau Brown A.I.A. Boston
July 7 & 8 1934
SEC D-D
SEC B
SEC A-A
SEC C-C
SEC E
Inch Scale for Details
Foot Scale for Elevation
DOORWAY·HOUSE·ON·WASHINGTON·ST·
ABOUT·1780·GLOUCESTER·MASSACHUSETTS

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Mantel Detail

THE MACKENZIE HOUSE—1760—GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

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